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ART. VIII.—*On the Winged Bulls, Lions, and other Symbolical Figures from Nineveh.* By E. C. RAVENSHAW, ESQ.,
M.A.S., F.G.S.

[Read April 2, 1853.]

THE monster bulls, lions, and other winged figures found at Nineveh, which have lately been erected in the new Hall of the British Museum, naturally excite the curiosity as well as the admiration of the public—curiosity to learn the meaning of these colossal myths of a nation which flourished some 3000 years ago, at the earliest dawn of art, and before the period of authentic history. It is desirable, therefore, that some attempt should be made to solve the problem.

A cursory inspection of these mysterious figures will satisfy the observer that they were not merely architectural ornaments, analogous to those which are used, at the present day, to decorate some Gothic church or palace constructed in the mediæval style; but were designed to symbolize certain mysteries, and pourtray certain ceremonies of the primeval religion of Assyria. So remote, however, is the era, and so obscure are the traditions which have been handed down to us in the Jewish, Persian, and Grecian histories, that any conclusions at which we may arrive must be attended with much difficulty and uncertainty. It is with the view rather of inviting the attention of others to the subject, than in the expectation that any theories of mine will be received, that I venture to lay before the Society the result of my speculations.

Cardinal Wiseman, in his recent lecture at Leeds, in defending the conduct of the Inquisition towards Galileo, is reported to have said that Galileo was not imprisoned for maintaining, merely as an hypothesis, that the earth moved round the sun, but because he asserted it as a fact, in opposition to the Scriptures. Profiting by the mistake of Galileo, I would premise that if anything in the following observations should appear to be unorthodox, I hope it will be understood that it is only advanced as an hypothesis, not asserted as a truth.

The principal objects among the Assyrian sculptures having a mythological character, are: 1st, the winged bull with a man's face; 2nd, the winged lion with a man's face; 3rd, the winged man with a fir-cone in one hand, and a square basket, or vessel, in the

other; and, 4th, a man, with the head and wings of an eagle or hawk.

The hypothesis which I propose to maintain with respect to these figures, is, first, that they are, as has been already surmised by Mr. Layard, the originals of the Cherubim of Ezekiel; that they were likewise the originals of the apocalyptic beasts of St. John; and that, slightly modified, they were afterwards adopted, and are now used, as the symbols of the four Evangelists. Secondly, I shall endeavour to show that they were originally invented by the Magi and Chaldeans, as astronomical symbols of the equinoctial and solstitial points; that they represent, in fact, the four seasons, spring, summer, autumn, and winter; perhaps, also, the four winds, and the four elements.

To those whose ideas of cherubim are derived exclusively from the observation of the winged heads on tombstones, or from the paintings of a Guido or a Raphael, it may be somewhat startling to learn that there is no authority in Scripture for these bodyless infants; and that the face of a cherub, instead of being the face of a baby, was in reality the face of a bull.¹

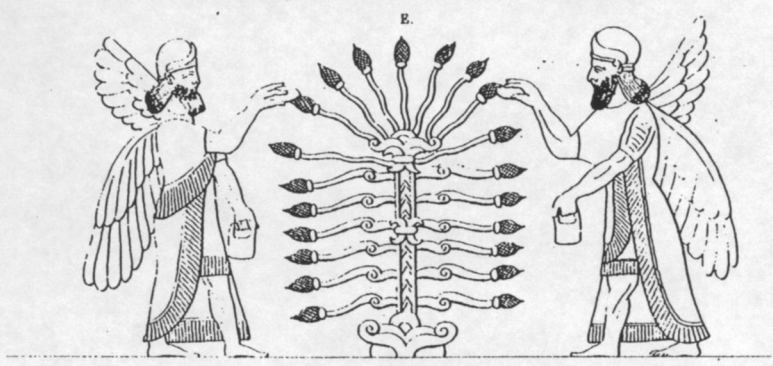
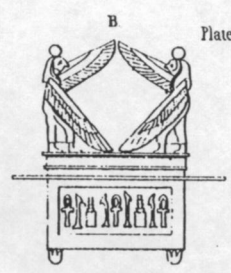
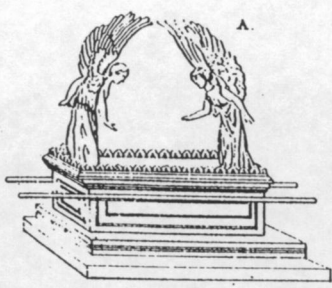
It may be proper, however, before proceeding to the visions of Ezekiel, to give a brief account of all that is related of the cherubim in the history of the Jews.

The first notice to be found of cherubim is chap. iii. v. 24, of Genesis where it is related² that God "placed at the east of the garden of Eden, Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life." It will be remarked that no mention is here made of the form of the cherubim.

It is a singular fact, that there is no further allusion to the cherubim until the time of Moses,—a period of about 2512 years. After the passage of the Red Sea, while Moses was on Mount Sinai, he directed the Israelites to make an ark (or chest) to hold the stone tables of the law, two cubits and a half long, a cubit and a half broad, and a cubit and a half high; and a lid of corresponding size, which was called "the mercy seat." He proceeds (Exodus xxv. v. 18,): "And thou shalt make two cherubims of beaten gold in the two ends of the mercy seat, one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; towards the mercy seat shall the faces

¹ Ezekiel x. 14; 1 Kings vi. 27.

² The French translation of the Vulgate has, "il mit des cherubins devant le jardin de délices, qui faisaient étinceler une épée de feu, &c." Josephus, in his History, does not allude to the cherubim in the garden of Eden.



of the cherubims be."—"And there [said the Lord] I will meet thee, and commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony," &c. Not a syllable is here said of the form of the cherubs: it was evidently assumed that the Israelites were so familiar with their appearance that no further instructions were necessary.

It is curious, however, that no tradition of their forms should have reached even the days of Josephus, who declares (*Antiq.* III. 6) that they resembled no animals that were ever seen by man, and that their form no man knew in his time. The modern representations of the ark and cherubim made by artists and scholars¹ (prior to the discoveries of the Egyptian antiquities) from the descriptions in Exodus, are very similar to the arks or boats of Osiris, which contained the emblems of life and stability; or the sacred beetle, overshadowed by the wings of two figures of the goddess Thmei, or Truth and Justice. (Compare Figs. A and B, Plate IV.)

The ark, borne upon two poles, accompanied the Israelites in all their wanderings until they reached the promised land. For about 370 years it remained at Shiloh, whence it was brought, under the designation of "the ark of the covenant of the Lord of Hosts who dwelleth between the cherubim," to Ebenezer, to support the Israelites in a battle with the Philistines. The latter, however, were victorious; captured the ark; and carried it to Ashdod. There it destroyed the image of Dagon, the fish-god; and after causing many other calamities to its captors, the Philistines were too glad to restore it to the Israelites at Kirjath-jearim, where it remained twenty years. From this place it was conveyed, about 1016 B.C., to Jerusalem, with great pomp and ceremony, by David.

The design of David to build a house for its reception was not carried out until the time of Solomon, 1012 B.C., and about 480 years after the Exodus. In the construction of his celebrated temple, a dark room, without windows, called "the oracle," twenty cubits, or thirty feet square, was prepared for the ark; and within the oracle Solomon made two cherubim of olive-wood, each ten cubits high, "five cubits was the one wing of each cherub, and five cubits the other wing of each cherub, and from the uttermost part of one wing to the uttermost part of the other was ten cubits; and they stretched forth the wings of the cherubim, so that the wing of one touched the one wall, and the wing of the other cherub touched the other wall; and their wings touched one another in the midst of the house; and he overlaid the cherubims with gold."

¹ Vide *Biblical Encyclopedia*. Arts. CHERUBIM and ARK OF THE COVENANT.

At the time of the dedication of the temple, the priests brought the ark of the covenant into the oracle of the house "to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim spread forth their two wings over the place of the ark, and the staves thereof" (1 Kings, ch. viii. v. 7). This was not difficult, for, as before stated, the ark was a chest only two cubits and a half long, by one cubit and a half broad and high. It does not appear whether the two small cherubims of beaten gold made by Moses were still upon the ark, or whether the larger cherubims of olive-wood, made by Solomon, were substituted for them. The former appears the more probable; first, because there is no mention of their having been removed; and secondly, because the size and the position of Solomon's cherubim were totally different. Instead of being on either end of the ark, and looking down on the mercy seat, they were standing erect on the ground on either side of the ark, and the right wing of the one touching the end of the left wing of the other; so that the four wings, spread in a straight line, reached twenty cubits, from wall to wall.

It will be observed in this, as in the preceding passages, no allusion is made to the forms, or heads of the cherubim. In 2 Chronicles, chap. iii. v. 13, it is stated: "The wings of the cherubims spread themselves forth twenty cubits, and they stood on their feet, and their faces were inwards." Here we are informed that at any rate they had feet and faces; but whether of man or beast, bird or reptile, is not stated; but, I may here remark, that if they had more than one face, it would certainly have been mentioned.

Solomon himself appears to have considered the ark and the cherubim merely as symbolical objects, towards which the faces of the Hebrews should be turned in prayer, as the Mahomedans turn to their Kiblah, the temple of Mecca. In his beautiful song, or prayer, dedicating the Temple (1 Kings, ch. viii. v. 27), he says:—"But will God indeed dwell upon earth? Behold, the heavens, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built. But hearken Thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray towards this place, and hear Thou in heaven, thy dwelling-place; and when thou hearest, forgive."

Great, however, as was Solomon's piety, and magnificent as was the temple, yet in a short time his 700 wives, and his 300 concubines, turned away his heart after other gods than Jehovah. On his death, the ten tribes of Israel revolted from his son Rehoboam, and ceased to worship at the temple. About twenty years after, it

was plundered by Shishak, king of Egypt; and about 400 years after that, it was finally burnt to the ground, with the ark and the cherubims, by Nebuchadnezzar, in 588 B.C.

After this period there is no mention of the cherubim, except in the dreams or visions of the prophets. Some have supposed that the seraphim of Isaiah are identical with the cherubim. In chapter vi, which is unconnected with the preceding or subsequent chapter, the prophet abruptly exclaims:—"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train¹ [that is, garments] filled the temple. Above it² [the throne] stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." It is evident they had also hands, as in v. 6, he says:—"Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar."

In Gesenius's Hebrew Dictionary, the word is derived from שָׂרָף "sharaf," to burn, as seraphims were "angels that appeared like a flaming fire."

We now come to the visions of Ezekiel (chap. i).

It was by the river Chebar,³ in the land of the Chaldeans, in the thirtieth year of the captivity, that the hand of the Lord was upon him,⁴ and he saw visions of God. "And I looked, and behold a whirlwind⁵ came out of the north, a great cloud and a fire infolding itself, as the colour of amber. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures.⁶ They had the likeness of a man, and every one had four faces, and four wings, and their feet were straight feet, and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot, and they had the hands of a man under their wings. As for the likeness of their faces, they had each the face of a man [in front], the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle [probably behind: the Vulgate says, "au

¹ "Vêtements" in the French Vulgate.

² In the Vulgate, "round about it stood the cherubim." Bib. Ency., Art. CHERUBIMS.

³ "Chobar," in French Vulgate supposed to be the Khaboor, which forms a junction with the Euphrates at Carchemish, about 225 miles N.W. from Babylon. At Arban, on the banks of the Khaboor, Mr. Layard discovered winged bulls and lions (p. 276, Second Expedition.)

⁴ "La main du Seigneur agit sur lui."—Vulg.

⁵ A similar whirlwind, without the cherubims, is described in p. 294 of Layard's Second Expedition.

⁶ "Animaux."—Vulg.

dessus"—above]. And their wings were stretched upwards, two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies, and they went every one straight forward, and they turned not when they went." By each of the four creatures was a wheel full of eyes, and the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. Stretched forth over the heads of the creatures was a firmament, as the colour of the terrible crystal, and under the firmament were their wings straight, the one towards the other. Every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two which covered on that side, their bodies; and when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, as the noise of great waters; when they stood, they let down their wings. Above the firmament was the likeness of a throne of sapphire stone, and upon the throne was the likeness of a man of fire the colour of amber, and a brightness shone round about him like that of the rainbow. This was the glory of the Lord.¹

The Lord then gives Ezekiel a book to eat, which enables him to prophecy against Jerusalem (chap. viii). In the following year, the hand of the Lord again fell upon him, and lifted him up by a lock of his hair, and carried him in a vision to Jerusalem, where he sees the abominations of the Israelites,—the image of Jealousy at the gate of the altar, and every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel portrayed upon the walls round about in the chambers of their imagery. The temple and ark having been destroyed, it seems that the Israelites adopted the idolatrous practices of the surrounding nations, and amongst others, probably, those of Assyria.

In chapter x, Ezekiel, in his dream or vision, sees the temple as it was before its destruction; and goes on to describe the cherubim in the sanctuary exactly as in the 1st chapter, and ends by saying:—"These were the living creatures I saw under the God of Israel, by the river of Chebar, and I know that they were the cherubims."

This is important, as in chapter i, they were only called "living creatures;" but here we are told distinctly that they were the cherubim.

There is one part of this description which is valuable, as it goes to show the meaning attached to the word "cherub." In verse 14, he says:—"Every one had four faces, the first was the face of a cherub, the second was the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle." Now, as in the previous description it was stated that the first face was that of an ox, while the other three faces were the same, it is clear that the word

¹ The "Farah-i-Ized" of the Persians.

cherub meant an ox. It is not apparent, however, why they should have been called *cherubim*¹ (ox-headed), in preference to *nusrim* (eagle-headed), or *arim* (lion-headed).

In a subsequent version, in which "the man of brass" describes the pattern after which the new temple was to be built, on the return of the Jews from their captivity, (chap. xli, v. 18,) it is ordered that the walls of the temple should be covered with cherubim and palm-trees; "so that a palm-tree was between a cherub and a cherub; and every cherub had two faces, so that the face of a man was toward the palm-tree on the one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm-tree on the other side." This is directly at variance with the former description. To add to the difficulty, in 1 Kings, ch. vii. v. 29, it is stated that, on the borders of the molten sea, made by Hiram, were "lions, oxen, and cherubim;" from which it would appear that the cherubs were something different from either lions or oxen; and that if they had anything in common with the visionary cherubim of Ezekiel, it must have been the head of an eagle, and of a man. An endeavour has been made to reconcile these discrepancies by the supposition that when represented on a flat surface, only two heads would appear, and that any figure having two of the above heads and four wings was called a cherub. This is a plausible conjecture. It is evident, however, that the cherubim of the visions were very different from the real historical cherubim of Moses and Solomon. There is no reason to suppose that the latter had more than one face and two wings, or that they had other than human feet and faces; while the former had four heads and four wings, and calf's feet, and four wheels full of eyes.² As it has been conjectured³ that the cherubim of Moses were derived from the figures of truth and justice on the arks and breast-plates of the Egyptian priests, so it may be plausibly surmised that the cherubim of Ezekiel were derived from the winged bulls, lions, and eagle-headed figures of Babylon and Nineveh. On this subject Mr. Layard observes, in his "Nineveh and its Remains," vol. ii., p. 404:—"The resemblance between the symbolical figures I have described, and those seen by Ezekiel in his vision, can scarcely fail to strike the reader. As the prophet had beheld the Assyrian palaces,

¹ The word is derived by some from "Charab," "to plough;" by others, from "Karab," "near,"—signifying those who were near the throne of God. (Hyde). In Psalm xviii, v. 10, cherub signifies "the wind:"—"He rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea he did fly upon the wings of the wind.

² Mitra and Serosh, two of the Izeds or angels of the Persians, were said to have 10,000 eyes.—Dabistan.

³ "Ancient Egyptians," Bibl. Encyc. Article ARK OF THE COVENANT.

with their mysterious images and gorgeous decorations; it is highly probable that when seeking to typify certain divine attributes, and to describe the divine glory, he chose forms that were not only familiar to him, but to people whom he addressed—captives like himself in the land of Assyria. Those who were uncorrupted by even the outward forms of idolatry sought for images to convey the idea of the Supremo God. Ezekiel saw in his vision the likeness of four living creatures, which had four faces, four wings, and the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides. Their faces were those of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. By them was a wheel, the appearance of which 'was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.' (Ezek. i. 16). It will be observed, that the four forms chosen by Ezekiel to illustrate his description—the man, the lion, the bull, and the eagle, are precisely those which are constantly found on Assyrian monuments as religious types. The 'wheel within wheel,' mentioned in connexion with the emblematical figures, may refer to the winged circles, or wheel, representing at Nimroud the Supremo Deity. These coincidences are too marked not to deserve notice; and do certainly lead to the inferences that the symbols chosen by the prophet were derived from the Assyrian sculptures."

I may here remark that winged objects were unknown to the simple religion of the Jews, which did not recognize graven images, or the likeness of anything in heaven or earth. It is generally supposed that angels have wings, because painters and poets have so described them, but there is no authority for it in the Bible. All the angels who have appeared, either in dreams or daylight, have assumed the simple form of man. There is no mention even of female angels.¹

Winged figures, however, were common in the mythology of Assyria and Egypt, whence they were successively adopted by the Greeks, Etruscans, Romans, and Christians.²

It seems to be now generally admitted that a hierarchy of angels, good and bad, formed no part of the Jewish faith until after the captivity; while it is well known to have been a principal feature of the Chaldean and Zoroastrian systems. Daniel is the first who mentioned the angels Gabriel and Michael³; and the Rabbins state

¹ In the Mugian religion, the Farvardigan, or Izeds of the five intercalary days of the year, were female angels who spun celestial robes for the saints in Paradise.

² Vide illustrations of Botta, Layard, and Sir G. Wilkinson. See also figures resembling our modern angels on the sculptures of Behistun.

³ These are possibly Semitic names of the Amshashpands or angels, called

that these names were derived from Babylon.¹ Indeed, the word "Satan," which in Hebrew means "an opposer, or adversary," is possibly a translation of the Zend word "Ahriman," which (from p. 356, vol. i, Dabistan) appears to have the same meaning. In one of the Izeshnes (p. 2, tome ii. of the Zendavesta) Ahriman is addressed as "*Schetan* Ahriman;"² and an ancient Greek writer Theodorus in Photius, calls the Persian Arimanius by the name of Satan.³ Under the name of "Shaitán," the evil principle is still recognized throughout the East. Both the name and the idea of Satan, therefore, may be thought by some to have originated with Zoroaster, or to have been adopted by him from some earlier tradition. The writer of the Apocalypse, in chapter 20, gives an account of Satan's career and ultimate fate, not very dissimilar from that in the Zendavesta:—"I saw an angel come down from heaven who laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years;" during which the saints will reign with Christ; after that period Satan must be loosed for a season (1,000 years?) and shall go out to deceive the nations; but ultimately he shall be cast into the lake of fire, together with Death and Hell.

According to the Zendavesta, Ormazd is to reign alone during the first 3,000 years after the creation. During the next 3,000 years, his operations will be blended with those of Ahriman. The subsequent 3,000 will belong entirely to Ahriman; and in the last 3,000, Ahriman, that *lying serpent*, shall be purified *by fire*, as well as the earth be freed from the *dark abode of hell*. Then the resurrection shall take place; and Ormazd and Ahriman, accompanied by all the good and evil genii, shall sing the praises of the Author of all good. (Vide Dabistan, vol. i, p. 357).

The war in heaven between Michael and his angels, with Satan and his angels, bears a striking analogy to that between Ormazd and

Bahman and Ardebehisht, two of the seven spirits which stood around the throne of Ormazd.

¹ Dib. Ency. Art. Chald. Phil. Rosh Hashoneh, p. 56.

"Les noms des anges et des mois, tels que Gabriel, Michel, Yar, Nisan, &c., vinrent de Babylone avec les Juifs."—Talmud de Jerusalem.

Deausobre, Hist. du Manich. tom. ii, p. 264, maintains that the saints of the calendar were imitated from the 365 angels of the Persians. "Yamblique (Iamblichus) dans les Mystères Egyptiens (sec 2. cap. 3) parle des Anges, Archanges et Seraphins comme un vrai Chrétien." Quoted by Volney, vol. ii., p. 355.

² It is curious that on one of Mr. E. Thomas's Sassanian Gems, (No. 21, Vol. XIII., p. 419, Journal of Royal Asiatic Society,) is a winged bull with the Pehlvi legend: "Satan atoore," or "Assyrian Satan."

³ Cudworth's Intellectual System, vol. i, p. 354.

his Amshaspands, with Ahriman and his Divs or Darujs. The war of Jupiter with the Titans; and of the Surs and Asurs of Hindu mythology, have been conjectured to have a similar origin: and Bentley supposes the whole to be founded on an astronomical allegory of the ascending and descending nodes of the constellations; the angels of light or summer, as opposed to the angels of darkness, or winter.

The Jews, on their return from exile, had forgotten their own language, and adopted that of Babylon; and, with the language they had acquired also much of the astronomy and mythology of the East, which was handed down from generation to generation until the time of John, who seems, from the above coincidences, to have been familiar with the writings of the Magi.

Before attempting to explain the symbolical meaning of the cherubim, it will be proper to consider what is stated regarding them in the Apocalypse.

In chapter iv, v. 7, four beasts are described as being "round about the throne, full of eyes before and behind; and the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle; and the four beasts had each of them six wings." The writer does not call them the cherubim; but though he has omitted the wheels, and given them only one head each, instead of four, it is obvious that the whole description, including the throne, and him that sat thereon, is derived from the vision of Ezekiel.¹

At an early period of the church these winged animals were adopted as the symbols of the four Evangelists. The winged lion was assigned to St. Mark, as the symbol of strength; the winged ox to St. Luke, as the symbol of sacrifice; the eagle and chalice to St. John, as the symbol of contemplation; and the winged man, with a cup and hatchet, to St. Matthew, as the symbol of power,—"*la puissance.*"²

In the Journal of the Archaeological Association for 1845-6, vol. i., pp. 191-2, it is stated that the Gospels of St. Columba, dated in the sixth century, furnish an illumination of a cross with the Evangelistic symbols at the four angles.

In the British Museum there is a copy of the Latin Vulgate, written about 800 A.D., in the frontispiece of which is a picture of

¹ Gesenius's Hebrew Dictionary—Art. *KARAB*—identifies them with the cherubim.

² *Annales Archéologiques*, vol. viii. p. 6.

St. Matthew, surrounded by the winged bull, eagle, lion, and man. The winged lion of St. Mark on the pillar of the Piazza, is familiar to all who have been at Venice, or admired the pictures of Prout and Canaletti. The same figures are to be seen carved on the façades of the churches at Poitiers, Chartres, &c., in France, built about the eleventh century; and they may be now found on the altar-cloths and painted windows of many modern churches, built or ornamented in the mediæval style. Irenæus was of opinion that they were emblematical of the four elements, the four quarters of the globe, and the four Gospels.¹

It is curious to think that the recent excavations of Nineveh should have revealed the originals of these remarkable symbols, which have been handed down to us from generation to generation for upwards of thirty centuries; and still more curious is it to think that the various nations who have been instrumental in their preservation should have been almost totally ignorant of the meaning which they were intended to shadow forth to the followers of Mahabad, or the disciples of Zoroaster.

The figures of the winged bull, however, are not confined to the locality of Nineveh, but have also been found at Persepolis, the capital of ancient Persia. Among the ruins of the temple or palace called the "Takht-i-Jamshid," or "throne of Jamshid,"² there are some magnificent winged bulls with human heads, a drawing of which is given in Ker Porter's *Travels*, page 591; and the capitals of the columns of the Chihil Minar are formed with bulls' heads. At Ali Nakshi Rustam,³ at each end of an altar or sarcophagus, supposed to be the tomb of Darius Hystaspes, there are figures having bulls' heads and lions' feet. The capitals of the pillars are formed by two bulls' heads looking different ways, which Ezekiel would probably have called cherubim. It is remarkable, that bulls with human heads are mentioned by Berosus the Magian, among the monster animals which existed at the period when the earth was covered with darkness and water, before Belus separated the light from the darkness.

When the winged bulls of Persepolis first became known in Europe, Anquetil du Perron supposed them to be a symbolical representation of Noah; though the connexion is not obvious. Mons. De Sacy, on the other hand, considered them to be representations of Kaiomars, the first king of the Peshdadian dynasty; and derived the

¹ Adv. Hæres., iii. 2.

² Date of Jamshid B.C. 800 according to Sir W. Jones; B.C. 3429 according to Firdâsi.

³ Ker Porter, p. 516.

name of the king Kaiomars from the Persian word "Gao-mard," signifying "the bull-man." The Persians believed that the first animals created were a man and a bull, the former called Kaiomars, and the latter Aboudad; and the bull was sometimes designated as "the man-bull." (Vide *Zendavesta*, tom. ii., p. 253, Note). It is not unreasonable to infer that the Nineveh bulls are the embodiment of this myth.

Sir G. Wilkinson has expressed an opinion¹ that the sphinx of Egypt, which is a lion with the head of a man, is a representation of the sovereign. It is not improbable that the sphinx of Egypt,² and the man-lion of Assyria, were identical in origin; the only difference being that the one is crouched, without wings, while the other is erect, with wings. But it does not appear to me that sufficient grounds are advanced for inducing the belief that they were typical of the sovereign. Heeren supports the opinion that they are symbolical of the monarch, chiefly because the head-dresses are similar³ to those worn by the kings. It may be asked, however, of what particular king could they be the type; and if the man-lion is the type of one king, the man-bull must be of another, and so on of the other monsters. These monsters, be it observed, are usually found placed as guardians at the entrance of palaces or temples; while on the walls of temples are found the portraits of the kings, sculptured in their natural form. At the temple of Karnak, at Thebes, there are avenues of lions and rams substituted for sphinxes. These could not all have been representations of the king. Besides, Heeren admits that wings always indicate a spiritual or symbolical being. The figures, therefore, are much more likely to symbolize the union of wisdom and power, which are the natural guardians of religion and government, than the qualities of any one particular monarch. Berosus (who was one of the Magi) says that similar figures were represented in the temple of Belus, at Babylon; and we know that they were abundant at Nineveh. The inference is, that they were symbolical ideas, which were recognized in common by the Persians, Babylonians, Assyrians, and Egyptians. Heeren⁴ has expressed his belief that the Persians derived their architecture and religion, together with these, and other

¹ *Ancient Egyptians*, vol. i., p. 416, Second Series.

² There were three kinds of sphinxes in Egypt: 1. the Andro-sphinx, or man-lion; 2. Crio-sphinx, with the head of a ram and body of a lion; 3. the Hiero-sphinx, with the head of a hawk, and the body of a lion.

³ The head-dresses are different: some have one horn, some two, and some three. Some have round caps, and some square.

⁴ He says there are traces at Ecbatana, the capital of Media, of the same style of architecture.

symbolical figures, from Media and Bactria, the country of Zoroaster and the Magi,¹ to whom has been ascribed the invention of astronomy, and the star-worship founded thereon. Sir W. Drummond, Ker Porter, Heeren, Volney, and others who have given their attention to the subject, are agreed that the worship of the bull arose from the circumstance of that animal having been selected by the framers of the Zodiac as the symbol of the constellation Taurus, with which the year commenced at the vernal equinox. Great festivals were held at this period, both in Persia and Egypt, in celebration of the *nauroz*, or new year, of which the bull was adopted, first merely as a symbol, but finally as an object of veneration, if not of worship, by all the eastern nations,—in Egypt, under the name of Apis; in India, under that of Nandi;² the golden calf of the Israelites; the heifer Baal of the Babylonians. The constellation of the bull engraved on the cylinders of the Chaldeans, denotes the same origin.³ Among the Yezidis of the present day, white oxen are dedicated to the sun (sheikh shams). Among the Druids of Wales, the bull or ox was the symbol of “Hu,” or “Huan,” the sun.⁴ The ox-stall was called “the sanctuary of Hu.” The yellow ox of spring was the sign Taurus, into which the sun entered when the Druids celebrated their great mysteries. It is worthy of remark, that their god was called “Hu, with the expanded wings;” which suggests the idea of a globe with wings, like those of the Assyrians and Egyptians. When the sun was in the constellation of Leo, “Hu” was called, “the lion of the greatest course.”⁵ The eagle was one of his symbols, which was carried aloft in their religious processions, like the strange bird carried by men, depicted on the Assyrian marbles (vide Layard). Pendragon, “the god of war, the ethereal,”⁶ is described by the Druids as having a rainbow for his girdle; which brings to mind the image of the Ferohar, or guardian spirit, which is seen on the marbles, hovering in the air over the head of the king, and bending a bow against his

¹ The Greeks, Aristotle, Eudoxus, Hermippus, Hermodorus, &c., place Zoroaster about 6000 n.c. Moreri, Bayle, &c., say that he ruled in Bactria in the time of Ninus (2200 n.c.), D’Herbelot, in the age of Feridun (1720 n.c.) According to Firdusi, a Zoroaster, the last of his name, lived in the time of Gushtasp, about 500 n.c. according to some, 800 n.c. according to others.

² In India, however, the year never began with Taurus. The Indians borrowed the symbol, with the rest of the Zodiac, from the West.—Bentley’s Hindoo Astronomy.

³ Layard, vol. i., p. 290.

⁴ Davis’s Mythology of the Druids, p. 139.

⁵ Ibid., p. 219.

⁶ Bahram was the Ized of victory among the Persians.

enemies. Ancient and modern writers are agreed that the religion of the Druids prevailed in the east of Europe, and accompanied the Celtic races in their migrations to the west. It is curious that *Ilū*, is one of the names of God in Arabic.¹ It signifies, "He is,"—the Self-Existent. It is very similar to the Hebrew name *יהוה* which, without the vowel-point is *Ihoooh*, or *יהוה* *Ihoo*,² "God is," which is still nearer. It is not impossible, therefore, that the Cymry—Cimri—Cimmorians, may be identical with Cymry (pronounced Kymry) of Wales; and that the ancient faith of the aborigines of England may have been derived from the plains of Shinar, or the hills of Media. The Cimbrians carried a brazen bull, as the image of their God, when they overran Spain and Gaul;³ and "Thor" of the Scandinavians means, in their language, a bull, as it does also in Chaldee.⁴ The Latin name Taurus is probably derived from Thor (which is usually pronounced Tor by continental nations), with the usual termination *us*.

Mr. Landseer, in his "Sabaean Researches," page 7, says, with reference to the figures on the Babylonian cylinders:—"The heads of the lion and bull allude to the zodiacal places of the summer solstice and vernal equinox. The Hebrew astronomers adhered to the ancient cherubic signs (which I assume to be astronomical), and to the system which had ordained Leo and Aquarius, 'the lion and the man' of Ezekiel, as signs of the solstices." The fact of the bull, or Taurus, having been selected as the symbol of the vernal equinox, shows that the point now called Aries must, at the period of forming the Zodiac, have coincided with the first degree of the constellation Taurus, and enables us to fix approximately the date on which the Zodiac was invented.

Mrs. Somerville, in page 182, of her "Mechanism of the Heavens," published in 1831, and probably written in 1830, observes that "the point γ Aries, has not coincided with the vernal equinox for 2230 years." If we deduct 1830, this will give us 400 B.C.⁵ for the period when they did coincide, that is, when the sign γ corresponded with the first degree of Aries. Now the precession of the equinoxes being

¹ Vide Richardson's Dictionary.

² Hence Iou, Jove, Jupiter?

³ Payne Knight's Inquiry into the Symbolical language of Art and Mythology, p. 22-3.

⁴ *תור* Tor: Ezra, vi. 9. 17; Daniel, iv. 25.

⁵ Landseer appears to have thought that the Eagle occupied the place of Scorpio, or the autumnal equinox, in the earliest zodiacs.

⁶ Volney says 300 B.C. (tome I., p. 332).

at the rate of seventy-one years and a half to a degree,¹ or 2145 years to a sign of thirty degrees, it follows that 2145 years antecedent to 400 B.C., *i. e.* in the year 2545² B.C., the point γ or vernal equinox coincided with the first degree of Taurus, and may therefore be assumed to be the date of the invention of the Zodiac. The first astronomers would naturally describe the constellations, and the position of the solstices and equinoxes as they appeared to them at that time.³ Thus the vernal equinox being in Taurus, the autumnal would be in Scorpio, the summer solstice in Leo, and the winter solstice in Aquarius. Accordingly, the Bull was worshipped in spring, the Lion in summer, and Aquarius in winter, under the form of a man pouring out two streams of water from a vase, which signified the Euphrates and Tigris, issuing from Mount Taurus. (Vide Plate IV. F). It does not appear that Scorpio was worshipped either in Egypt or Assyria. The reason may be, that this was the period at which the nights began to lengthen,—the commencement of the reign of darkness, *i. e.* of Typhon or Ahriman, when Osiris was supposed to die. It was therefore a season for lamentation instead of rejoicing. There was, however, a festival on the twenty-second day of the month Paophi, called “the nativity of the staves of the sun,”—intimating that the sun was becoming weaker, and required staves to support him.⁴

As it required seventy-one years and a half for the equinoxes to move one degree, it is probable that the precession was not discovered until several centuries after the Zodiac was framed. When, however, after a lapse of 2145 years, the equinoxes had receded a whole sign, the astronomers could not fail to observe the phenomenon; and it became necessary to modify their system. The point γ , or the first degree of Aries, was then selected as the commencement of the year, as it coincided with the vernal equinox; and the Ram or Lamb (Ammon) was substituted for the Bull as the object of public veneration at the annual festival. Cancer, represented either by a crab or a scarabæus,

¹ Mechanism of the Heavens, p. 396.

² This would be about 200 years before the Flood according to Usher's calculation, or 2340 B.C.; but 600 years after it, according to Hales, Jackson, and the Septuagint. Pliny, Hist. Nat. VII., 57, says that astronomical observations were found at Babylon by Alexander, and sent to Aristotle, of a date corresponding to 2200 B.C. Menes, first king of Egypt, reigned 2320 B.C. Ancient Egypt, vol. i., p. 41.

³ M. Jomard, in his Description d'Égypte, tome i., p. 260, says there is a tableau in the Tombs of the Kings at Thebes, with the equinoxes exactly in this position.

⁴ Ancient Egyptians, vol. ii., Second Series. p. 315.

in Egypt,¹ supplanted the lion as the symbol of the summer solstice ; and Capricorn, represented by a goat with a fish's tail, was venerated as the symbol of the winter solstice. The date of this change may fairly be ascribed to about 400 B.C., being the period at which the vernal equinox coincided with the first degree of Aries. The ascertainment of this date is important, as all writings which allude to the vernal equinoxes being at the first degree of Aries, must be more recent than 400 B.C. I say the first degree of Aries, because, as the equinox retrogrades, or moves in an opposite direction to the sun in the Zodiac, the vernal equinox really entered that constellation in 2544 B.C., that is, the year after it quitted Taurus. In like manner, the sign Υ entered the thirtieth degree of Pisces in 399 B.C., and moving backwards, reached the first degree in 1745 A.D. (See Plate V. Fig. A). Accordingly, the Fish ought to have taken the place of the Ram, in public estimation. But habit is all-powerful ; and nations, like individuals, are long in unlearning what they have been taught in their infancy. Virgil, who wrote in the first century of our æra, and several hundred years after the vernal equinox had ceased to be in Taurus, still followed the ancient mode of expression :—

“Candidus auratis aperit cum cornibus annum
Taurus.”

After the foregoing observations, little doubt can remain that the colossal bulls and lions of Assyria, Persia, Babylon, and Egypt, were symbols of the sun in the constellations of Taurus and Leo, and consequently of the seasons of spring and summer. The period of the new year,—of the new birth of nature after the long night of winter, when Typhon or Ahriman—the spirit of darkness and death, held sway, was naturally a season of rejoicing ; and the figure of the bull (Apis, in Egypt), Cherub, perhaps, in Assyria, was held up as the proper object of public veneration. In summer, when the sun reached his greatest height and vigour at the solstice, when the snows melted, and rains fell on the mountains of Central Africa, and the Nile began to rise, and spread fertility over the lands of Egypt, the lion was the appropriate object of adoration. The human head of the bull, like the human head of the sphinx (or man-lion), was merely the image, or avatar of the sun, combined with the image of the constellation. The sculptors, in compliment to the monarch of the time, probably gave to the sun the likeness of the king, who in Oriental language is still called, “the shadow of God,” ظل الله. In the

¹ Vide oblong zodiac of Dendera ; also, *Ancient Egyptians*, vol. ii, Second Series, p. 257. The worship of the Scarabeus was therefore the worship of the sun at the summer solstice.

Zoroastrian system, every man had his *Ferohar*, or celestial spirit, of which he was the copy or shadow, on earth. But the *Ferohar*, again, was the shadow of a light more resplendent than itself; and so on up to *Mez* (*Ormazd*).¹

The figure in the winged circle on the Persian and Assyrian monuments, at *Ali Nakshi Rustam*, &c., generally resembles, in feature and head-dress, the king who is offering up his prayers before the fire-altar below.² This is probably his *Ferohar* and guardian angel, who also goes before him in battle with bended bow; and returns, after victory, with his bow unbent. The human figure is sometimes omitted, leaving the circle and wings; when it is almost identical with the figures of the winged globes on the temples of Egypt.

The figure of the man contending with a lion or bull, probably indicated the sun passing through or conquering the signs of the Zodiac. It has been conjectured by Dupuis that the twelve labours of *Hercules* were in like manner a myth, founded on the annual labours of the sun. Sometimes the sun is represented by an eagle or hawk's head, instead of a human head; and is always victorious in his contests with the lion, bull, &c. The griffin, which is formed by a hawk's head on the body of a lion, is probably only a different mode of representing the sun in the constellation of *Leo*. In Egypt, *Horus*, a name of the sun, was represented with the head of a hawk.³ Bentley, in his explanation of the oblong zodiac of *Dendera*, (p. 253) says, that "the day on which the sun enters a sign is sometimes marked by the figure of a man with a hawk's head, as a symbol of the sun." The figure of *Horus*, in Plate 88 of Sir G. Wilkinson's *Ancient Egyptians* (see Plate IV. Fig. C.), where he is presenting a soul to *Osiris* after the final judgment, is strikingly similar to the hawk-headed figure on the Assyrian marbles. (See Plate IV. Fig. D). The latter, as already observed, is found on a Babylonian cylinder in juxtaposition with the figure of *Aquarius*, but walking from it, representing, apparently, the sun just quitting that sign, and about to enter *Pisces*. (See Plate IV. Fig. F). The same figure, with the exception of the wings, will be seen preceding the figure of *Aquarius* in the oblong zodiac of *Dendera*. (See Plate IV. Figs. G. and H.)

Some have identified the eagle-headed figures with *Nisroch*, in whose temple *Sennacherib* was slain, from the circumstance of *Nisr* in Hebrew signifying an eagle; but Colonel Rawlinson states that the

¹ Ker Porter, p. 688.

² The ring or circle in his hand, is the symbol of dominion; and the girdle, the *costi* or cincture of a priest. Heeren, p. 216.

³ *Ancient Egypt*, vol. i, p. 398, Second Series.

name of the god in the Nineveh inscription is distinctly "Assarac;"¹ and that in the Septuagint version of the Bible the name is *Assarax*, not Nisroch, from which he infers that the latter may have been an error of the early copyists of our Hebrew version. Assarac² was the god peculiar to Assyria, and is called in the inscriptions "the father and king of gods." It has been conjectured that Assarac may be identical with the biblical Assur, "who went forth and builded Nineveh" (Gen. x), and may have been afterwards deified by his subjects. It seems that every province had a separate deity; but the god of the king of Assyria was of course considered the king of all the gods,—the "Jehovah Elohim." According to Berosus the Magian, Bel was the god of Babylon, and corresponded with Ormazd of the Persians, in his character of creator and governor of the world. In 2 Kings, chapter xvii, v. 30, it is stated that "every nation made gods of their own: the men of Babylon made Succoth-bonoth (the Pleiades), the men of Cuth made Nergal (Mars), and the men of Hamath made Ashema." It is probable that the names of these local deities were those of the stars, planets, and constellations, which were selected by each tribe or nation, as its guardian angel. In the Akhtaristan, it is stated that according to the Sepsian tenets, "the stars and the heavens are the shadows of incorporeal effulgences." On this account they erected the temples of the seven planets,³ and had talismans of metal and stone suitable to each star. This accounts for the figures of the constellations which are found upon the cylinders discovered at Babylon and elsewhere. Every individual, as well as nation, had his "bright, particular star," which presided over his birth, whose spirit watched over his safety, whose name or image was engraved on his signet, and on whom he called for aid in time of trouble.

Reverting, however, to the hawk-headed figure, so far as we can judge from the Assyrian sculptures, he would appear to be rather

¹ Journal Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. XII., p. 426.

² In the inscriptions of Behistun, Darius, being a Persian, declares all his conquests to have been made with the aid of Ormazd.

³ The Persian names of the planets were:—

Kaiwan	Saturn.
Hormuzd	Jupiter.
Bahram	Mars.
Har	Sun.
Nahid	Venus.
Tir	Mercury.
Mah	Moon.

The twelve months, and the thirty days of each month, had also their Izeds, or Angels; but their names seem derived chiefly from those of the planets, and the four elements. Vide Dabistan.

the performer of some act of worship, than the object of worship himself. He is generally represented with a square vessel in one hand, and a fir-cone in the other ; or he is standing before the sacred tree, and placing a fir-cone on one of the branches. (See Plate IV. Figs. D. and E). Sometimes he follows the king, as if to assist him in some ceremony. It is not unlikely, therefore, that he may be a symbol of the season, the festival of which the king is in the act of celebrating ; and as we find this hawk-headed figure associated with the constellation of Aquarius, both on the oblong zodiac of Dendera, and on the Babylonian cylinders, there is a strong probability that he is the symbol of the sun at the winter solstice, as the lion was of the summer solstice.

Athanasius states that pine-cones were offered in sacrifice to idols by the pagans. (Encyclical Epistle, vol xiii, p. 6. Library of the Fathers.) The fir-cone is generally believed to be the emblem of fire ; and the square vessel probably contained the holy-water, which in the Zendavesta is called the water of "zor," or "foreo." His wings may have represented the air ; and his body, the earth ;—the four elements, which were the objects of veneration in Persia and Egypt.

There remains then for consideration, only the fourth figure, or winged man, holding a fir-cone in one hand, and a square vessel or basket in the other.

As the other three figures with which the winged man is associated have been shown to represent the solstices and the vernal equinox, it is not unreasonable to infer that this figure was intended to symbolize the autumnal equinox. Indeed, in some notes which I made several years ago, before the Nineveh marbles were discovered, from a quarto book by Le Noir, published in Paris in 1811, on the Egyptian origin of Freemasonry, I find it distinctly stated that these four figures,—the winged bull, the winged lion, the winged man, and the eagle, were the guardians of the four gates of heaven, viz. : the equinoxes and solstices ; but as the work is only to be found in the hands of a Freemason of the degree of the Rose Croix, I am unable to refer to it to ascertain upon what ancient authority the statement is made. This is the more to be regretted, as such an explanation, found in any ancient Greek work, would satisfactorily settle the question. From the Zendavesta it appears that in the astronomical system of Zoroaster, which was probably similar to, though not perhaps identical with, that of the Assyrians and Chaldeans, there were also four guardians of the four quarters of the heavens, viz. : Taschter,¹ of the East ; Sativas, of the West ; Venand, of the South ;

¹ This name is very like "Twashtri," one of the seven Adityas mentioned in

and Haftorang, of the North. The meaning of these names is unknown to me ; but it is certainly unlikely that Venand represented the man-lion, for it is a most remarkable fact, that the lion is never mentioned in the *Zendavesta* or *Bundehesh* among the different species of animals created by Ormazd. The same silence is observed with respect to cats, tigers, and all the feline tribe, which is a strong confirmation of the northern origin of the Magian cosmography. Indeed, it was at Balkh, the capital of King Gushtasp, that Zoroaster is said to have promulgated his doctrine, about 500 B.C.¹ Neither are lions to be found in Egypt ; but they are still found on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates, as they were in the days of Sardanapalus, if we may judge from the hunting-scenes of the Nineveh marbles. I am inclined to think, therefore, that we owe the constellation of the Lion, as well as of Aquarius, to the Assyrians.

It is not easy to understand, however, why the winged man² should have been selected to represent the autumnal season, in preference to Scorpio, which was the sign in which the autumnal equinox was situated when the vernal was in Taurus. It is possible that this sign among the Assyrians may not have been invented at that period, or that it may have had a different name. The wings of the figure evidently denote either a fabulous or spiritual being. It may, therefore, have been intended to represent either Kaiomars, the first fabulous king of Persia, who in their legends, is connected with the primordial bull, or one of the Izeds or angels of the months or days. For instance, Mihr, alias Mithra, appears to have been the Ized of the seventh month, or September ; and may therefore not unreasonably be supposed to have symbolized the autumnal equinox. This Ized was supposed to traverse the space between heaven and earth, bringing the light of the sun to the globe, directing the course of the waters, ripening the fruits of the field, and maintaining the harmony of the world. There is, however, another Ized called Serosh,³ who performs

the Rig Veda. Mitra, one of the Persian Izeds, also appears as one of the 'Adityas. Bishen, one of the twenty-eight Persian lunar mansions, may be the Bishan or Vishnu of the Hindus ; and Oziren, guardian of the third hour after noon, is not unlike Osiris.

¹ Niebuhr, in his *Lectures*, says, that Gushtasp cannot be identified with Darius Hystaspes, so that this date is very uncertain. Heeren thinks the date should be 800 B.C. if not earlier.—Vol. i, p. 241.

² In the ancient Egyptian planisphere given by Kircher, Typhon, or a man with legs terminating in a fish's tail, and supported by two staves, is represented in place of Scorpio. Sir W. Drummmond, in his *Œdipus Judaicus*, p. 126, says that the Jews substituted the eagle for the scorpion, the latter being a sign accursed.

³ Hyde, p. 261 : and *Dabistan*, vol. i, p. 287.

a conspicuous part in the angelology of the Persians. This Ized is said to stand at the entrance of the "Chinivad Pul,"¹ (or suspension-bridge which spans the gulf of hell, between heaven and earth), and to hold in his hand a balance, in which the good and evil deeds of the dead are weighed against each other, while the Ized Rashni Rast records the result for the judgment of Ormazd. Serosh here occupies the same place as Anubis in the mythology of Egypt, and Rashni Rast corresponds with Thoth, the secretary of Osiris.²

As Anubis was translated to the Zodiac to represent Libra, holding in his hand the balance of the equinox; so his prototype Serosh, the weigher of the deeds of men, may have been considered by the Magi and Assyrians as the fitting symbol of the weigher of the hours at the autumnal season.

From the foregoing observations, then, there appears much reason to believe that the colossal bulls in the British Museum are figures of Aboudad, the primordial bull mentioned in the Zendavesta, and the symbol of the sun in Taurus or the vernal equinox; and that the winged man on one side is the Ized Mitra or Serosh, the guardian of the autumnal equinox. That as these represented the equinoxes, so the winged man-lion, and the eagle-headed man, symbolized the solstices. That these four mystical figures were the cherubims which watched the four gates of heaven—which upheld the zodiac, the throne of Ormazd,—which subsequently characterized the dreams of Ezekiel, and the visions of St. John, and were finally assumed as the symbols of the Evangelists.

With respect to the other mythical figures which appear in the sculptures and cylinders, it is not improbable that the man with the goat in his arms signified the constellation of Capricorn, and the newly discovered fish-god that of Pisces. This is in a manner confirmed by the Assyrian cylinder described by Mr. Layard (Second Expedition, p. 343), where the fish-god is represented as performing a religious ceremony before the sacred tree, and looking up to a figure of the sun, in the shape of the winged all-seeing eye of Bel or Ormazd. This is probably the celebration of the day on which the sun entered the constellation of Pisces. The figure of the fish-god exactly corresponds with the description of Oannes, the man-fish, which came out of the Red Sea to instruct the Chaldeans :—"Atque, e Rubro Mare

¹ When on Al Sirat's arch I stood,
Which totters o'er the fiery flood,
With Paradise within my view,
And all its houris beckoning through."—BYRON.

² Vide Wilkinson's Egypt.

emersisse, ait horrendam quondam belluam cui nomen Oannes. Eamque toto quidem corpore piscem fuisse, verum sub capite piscis aliud caput oppositum, et in cauda pedes ad instar hominis, et loquelam humanæ similem. Ejusque imaginem ad hunc usque diem delineatam supercesse." It is certainly very curious that after 3000 years this monster should have issued again, not from the depths of the sea, but the depths of the earth, to confirm the traditions of Chaldean, and the veracity of Berosus; and perhaps to enlighten us as to the original form of the constellation of Pisces.¹

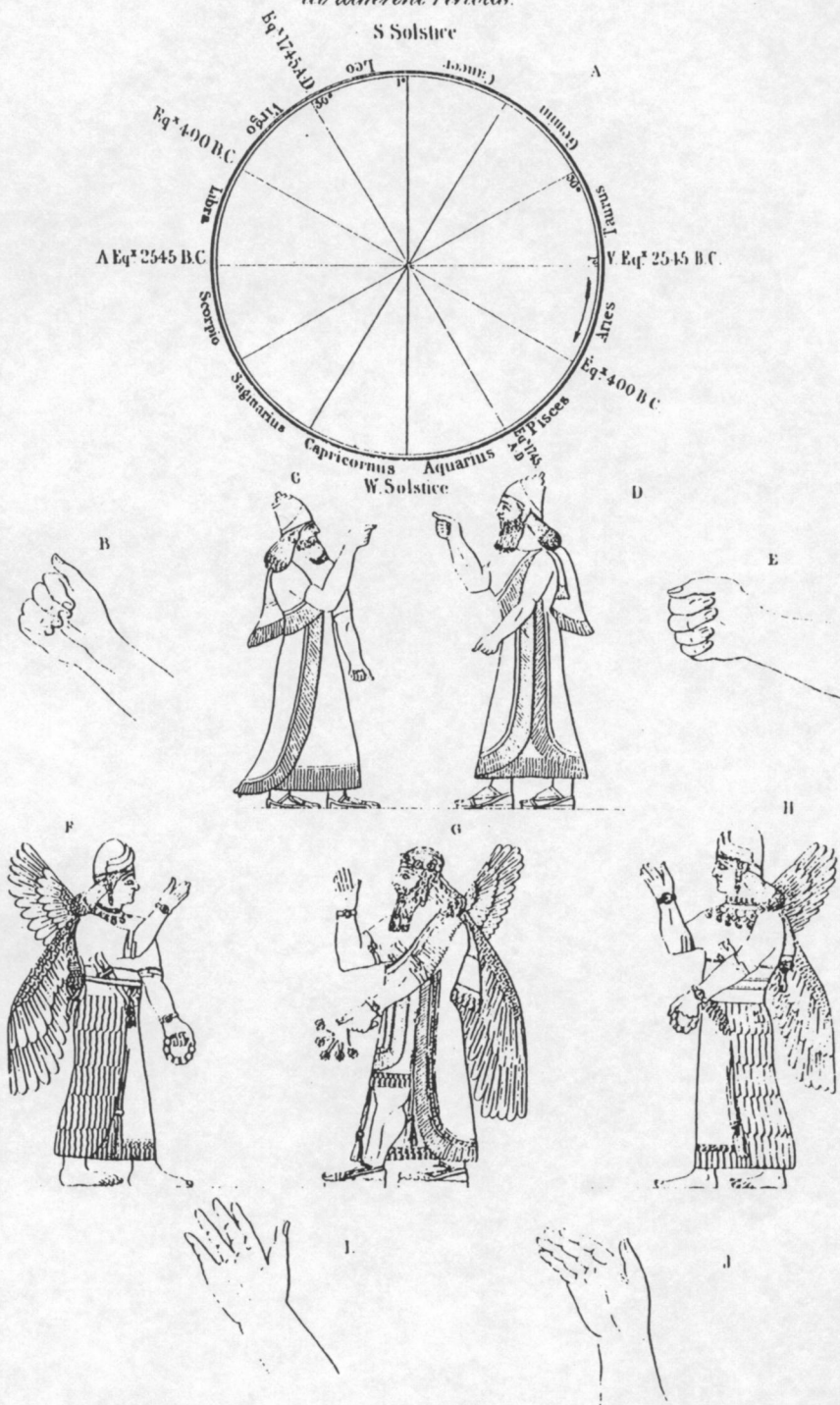
It will probably be found hereafter that all the names of the gods found on the Nimroud Tablets and on other inscriptions, will prove, on further inquiry, to be the names of other constellations, stars, or planets, which were chosen as the guardian angels of nations, kings, or individuals.

The so-called mystic tree, which forms such a conspicuous object on the sculptures, should not pass unnoticed. (See Plato IV. Fig. E.) It appears on the dresses of the kings and priests, on the harness of the horses, and on the walls of palaces. It is generally found on cylinders surrounded by priests and winged figures, who are performing some religious ceremony before the sun, moon, or stars. Sometimes the hawk-headed figure, or the winged-man, is to be observed offering a fir-cone to the tree, having several cones already upon it. Some trees have five-leaved rosettes, without any fir-cone. Others have pomegranates; and others acorns at the end of their branches. Some have a single row of leaves; some a double row. The number of rosettes, or leaves, varies considerably,—five, seven, nine, eleven, twelve, thirteen. In the double trees some have twenty-nine in the outer row or arch, and sixteen in the inner one. The cones appear in some to be fixed on the end of branches which have moveable hinges. It certainly does not resemble any earthly tree; but it is possible it may represent a celestial one. It has evidently some astronomical meaning, as the winged circle is generally seen hovering above; or the new moon and some stars are observed stationed around it. It seems probable that they are orreries,² showing the month, or the day, or the season which is being celebrated by the winged figures, who officiate as priests on the occasion. The inner circle may represent the months

¹ In the Egyptian Zodiac, constructed by the second Hermes, the figure of Dagon, half-man and half-fish, is inserted in the place of Pisces. Vide Kircher.

² Landseer was of opinion that the "asherahs" of the Jews, improperly translated "groves," were a kind of orrery for determining the position of the planets. Josephus states, that the seven branches of the great candlestick in the Temple, symbolized the seven planets.

*Diagram
of the Position of the Equinoxes & Solstices
at different Periods.*



or lunar mansions, and the outer, the days of the solar months. It is to be remarked that the cones never exceed thirty.

In the Dabistan, (Vol. i., page 60) it is stated: "The ancient Persians, after offering prayers to the self-existent Creator, repeated benedictions to the seven planets, particularly on their days. After this, the worshipper recites praises of the guardian of the month, and those of the days of the month." It is not improbable that the Assyrians had the same custom; and that these are the ceremonies which we observe the priests performing before the mystic tree. The fir-cone or other fruit, presented by the priests, are probably symbolical of the month or day then being added to the year or zodiacal tree. (See Plate IV. Fig. E.)

The Cabalists¹ represented the tree of life as marked with emblems of the Zodiac, and as bearing twelve fruits.

Ezekiel also says of the tree of life: "it shall bring forth new fruits according to its months." St. John, in the Apocalypse, repeats the same idea.—"There were trees of life which bare twelve manner of fruits, yielding their fruit every month." It is curious that the Druids had also a tree of life, called the "Yggdrassil," or "the ash-tree of life,"—the symbol of the earth watered by the Fates. The Assyrian and Jewish tree, however, was the symbol of the heavens, the leaves whereof were the stars, and the months or zodiacal signs, the fruits. The position of the hands of the priests, while worshipping before the tree, is very similar, if not identical with some of the twenty-four Moodras, described by Mrs. S. C. Belnos, in her work entitled the "Sundya," or "Prayers offered to the Sun by the Brahmins." In Plate 5, for instance, the Moodras called "Moosti" and "Moodgar," (see Plate V. Figs. B. and E.) are similar to the position of hands in Plate 6, of Layard's "Monuments of Nineveh" (see Plate V. Figs. C. and D.); and those called "Pulla" and "Singhkrantee" (see Plate V. Figs. I and J.) resemble those in Plates 7 and 37 of Layard. (See Plate V. Figs. F. G. H.)

The winged circles and winged eyes which are frequently placed above the sacred tree, and seem to form the principal object of adoration to the priest and winged figures beneath, are not unworthy of our attention. They resemble so closely the winged globes over the portals of the Egyptian temples that it is difficult not to admit the identity of their origin. In Persia, they probably signified at first, "Time without bounds,"—"Zarua Akerene," described in the Zend-

¹ Sir W. Drummond, quoted by Landseer, p.202.

avesta, as "the ever-soaring bird,"¹ the creator of Ormazd and Ahriman. A winged circle, which has neither beginning nor end, but appears to be ever soaring onward, was a not inappropriate emblem of eternity. Father Time, however, being a mere abstraction, to whom as little worship appears to have been offered by the ancient Magi as by the modern Parsis, it is probable that the winged circle came to be considered the symbol of Ormazd, the active creator and source of all good ; and sometimes, perhaps, as the symbol of the sun, which was considered the eye of Ormazd. In Egypt, the winged disc appears to have represented the sun under the name of "Hut," or "Agathodemon."² It is very remarkable that Osiris was also the son of Time, called "Seb," "the father of the Gods." In like manner the Greeks considered Jupiter to be the son of Kronos (Time), though, as with the Persians and Egyptians, nearly all power and worship was monopolised by the son.³ So, in India, no adoration is paid to Brahma, but only to Vishnu and Siva.⁴ The sign of "Seb" was a goose, like the Vahan of Brahma, whose symbol is Time. May not "Seb" be the same as "Siva," who is thought by some⁵ to mean Time, and who is also called "Seo," or "Seb" ?

Berosus, in his account of the deluge in Mesopotamia, which is obviously the same tradition,⁶ somewhat modified, as that recorded in Genesis, mentions that Xisuthrus was warned in a dream of the approaching flood by Kronos ;⁷ and as in another place he calls the Deity who separated the light from the darkness, and created all living creatures, by the name of Bel, it seems probable that Bel was considered by the Babylonians to be the son of Kronos. Whether the Assyrians had a similar myth we do not yet know ; but it is not

1 "Thou from the first
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread,
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss,
And mad'st it pregnant."—MILTON.

² Bunsen, p. 497.

³ Diogenes Laertius (in Proemio) says, that Aristotle declared that Jove was identical with Ormazd, and Pluto with Ahriman. Quoted by Volney, p. 61, vol. v.

⁴ The Preserver and Destroyer. May not this be another version of Ormazd and Ahriman ?

⁵ Bentley.

⁶ It is worthy of remark, that the Chaldean tradition of Berosus limits the deluge to the valley of the Euphrates, which is more in conformity with the conclusions of geologists than the account in Genesis. The Persians have no tradition of any deluge.

⁷ The Chaldean name of "Kronos" is not given either by Syncellus or Eusebius, in their respective traditions.

unlikely that Assarac, or Assur,¹ may prove to be the son of the "Ancient of Days," like Ormazd, Bel, Osiris, and Jupiter. If so, the conclusion seems inevitable that all these religions had one common origin, though modified in details according to the language, locality, and idiosyncrasy of different nations ; but whether that origin is to be traced to the banks of the Nile, the Euphrates, or the Tigris, or to the remoter hills of Media and Bactria, is a problem not easily solved.

Speculations of the nature in which I have above indulged, may be thought to be more curious than profitable. The history of the past has little attraction for those who are engaged in the struggles of the present. But to some, who have leisure for such pursuits, it may not be uninteresting to inquire, what the "wise men of the East" may have thought and done 3000 years ago, when the world was comparatively young, standing, as it were, at the half-way house between to-day and the creation of man ;—to read the primitive writings on the marbles of Nineveh, which contain perhaps the first records of history ;—to watch the early efforts of the sculptor, which gave the first impulse to art ;—to learn what were the traditions of Asia, at that early period, as to the origin and destiny of the human race ; and what notions were then entertained as to a creator and governor of the universe.

I have feebly endeavoured to explain some of the Assyrian myths: where I have failed, I trust that others will be more successful. At any rate, my failures may serve as sign-posts, pointing out to the future traveller the road to be avoided, and perhaps suggestive of the right path to be followed to reach the desired terminus of truth.

¹ M. Burnouf, in his *Commentaire sur le Yacna*, p. 71, says, that the true reading of Ormazd is "Ahura-mazda" or "the great Ahura;" and that M. Bopp, has stated that Ahura is a regular transformation of the Sanskrit "Asura." If so, the god of Nineveh and the god of Persia may be identical, differing only in the pronunciation of the name. It is remarkable, that one of the names of God among the British Druids was "Al Adur," the glorious.—*Davies' Mythology* p. 528.